

[illegible]

which he moved there dwelt until today. The loss was \$10,000.

"I do not know" the prisoners who were then released.

for some time. He is getting over
hundreds of cracking good pictures for
the firm by which he is employed.

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The Hollow of Her Hand

by George Barr McCutcheon
Author of "Graustark," "Truxton King," etc.

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"A member of my family has died. They know it in the hotel by this time. I was called to the death bed tonight. That is all you will have to know."

"Oh, I am sorry!"

"Come, let us go in. When we reach my room, you may order food and drink. You must do it, not I. Please try to remember that it is I who am suffering, not you."

A sleepy night watchman took them in to the elevator. He was not even interested. Mrs. Wrandsall did not speak, but leaned heavily on the arm of her companion. The door had no sooner closed behind them than the girl collapsed. She sank to the floor in a heap.

"Get up!" commanded her hostess sharply. This was not the time for soft, persuasive words. "Get up at once. You are young and strong. You must show the student to show it. I cannot help you if you quail."

The girl looked up pitifully, and then struggled to her feet. She stood before her protectress, wearing like a trail road in the wind, pallid to the lips.

"I beg your pardon," she murmured. "I will not give way like that again. I dare say I am faint. I have had no food, no rest—but never mind that now. Tell me what I am to do. I will try to obey."

"First of all, get out of those muddy, frozen things you have on."

Mrs. Wrandsall herself moved stiffly and with unsteady limbs as she began to remove her own outer garments. The girl mechanically followed her example. She was a pitiable object in the strong light of the electric light. Muddy from head to foot, water-stained and bedraggled, her face streaked with dirt, she was the most unattractive creature one could well imagine.

These women, so strangely thrown together by fate, maintained an unbroken silence during the long, fumbling process of partial disrobing. They were locked at one another, and yet were not fully conscious of the contact each felt in the other. The silent warmth of the room, the abrupt transition from gloom and cheer to a comfortable obscurity, had a more pronounced effect on the stranger than on her hostess.

"It is good to feel warm once more," she said, "and to find the room in my hands. I am very glad to be here."

They were sitting in Mrs. Wrandsall's chamber just off the little hall. Three or four trunks stood against the walls. I dismissed my maid on landing. She robbed me, said Mrs. Wrandsall, of the relief that was apparent in her mind. She opened a closet door and took out a thick elder down, which she tossed across a chair. Now pull up the office and say that you are speaking for me. Say to them that I must have something to eat, something that the hour may be I get out some clean underwear for me. Oh, yes, if they ask about me, say that I am cold and ill. That is sufficient. Here is the bath. Please go as quick about it as possible."

Moving as if in a dream, the girl did as she was told. Twenty minutes later there was a knock at the door. A waiter appeared with a tray and service table. He found Mrs. Wrandsall lying back in a chair, attended by a slender young woman in a pink and white dress, who was gazing at her with a look of intense interest. "You are not to return for these things," she said as he went out.

In silence she ate and drank. Her eyes looking on with gloomy interest. It was no shock to Mrs. Wrandsall to find that the girl, who was no more than twenty-two or three, possessed unusual beauty. Her great eyes were blue—the lovely Irish blue—her skin was fair and smooth, her features regular and of the delicate mold which defines the well-bred gentleness of a woman of the world. Her hair, now in order, was dark and thick and lay softly about her small ears and neck. She was not surprised to repeat, for she never known Chellis Wrandsall to show interest in any but the most attractive of her sex. She found herself smiling bitterly as she looked.

But who may know the thoughts of the other occupant of that little sitting room? Who can put herself in the place of that despairing, hunted creature who knew that blood was on her hands with which she ate, and whose eyes were filled with visions of a death-chair?

As great was her fatigue that long before she finished the meal her tired legs began to droop. Her head to nod spasmodic surrenders to an over-riding desire for sleep. Suddenly she dropped the fork from her fingers and sank back in the comfortable air, her head resting against the upholstered back. Her lids fell, and she dropped to the arms of the



"The Black Pile is Mine, the Gay Pile is Yours!"

chair. A line appeared between her dark eyebrows—indicative of pain. For many minutes Mrs. Wrandsall watched the haggardness deepen in the face of the unconscious sleeper. Then, even as she wondered at the act she went over and took up one of the slim bands in her own. The hand of an aristocrat! It lay limp in hers, and helpless. Long, tapering fingers and delicately pink with the return of warmth.

Rousing herself from the mute contemplation of her charge, she shook the girl's shoulder. Instantly she was awake and staring, alarm in her dazed, bewildered eyes.

"You must go to bed," said Mrs. Wrandsall quietly. "Don't be afraid. No one will think of coming here."

The girl rose. As she stood before her benefactress, she heard her murmur as if from afar-off. "Just about your size and figure," and wondered at a little.

"You may sleep late. I have many things to do and you will not be disturbed. Come, take off your clothes and get into my bed. Tomorrow we will plan further."

"But, madam," cried the girl, "I cannot take your bed. Where are you to go?"

"If I feel like lying down, I shall lie there beside you."

The girl stared. "Lie beside me?"

"Yes. Oh, I am not afraid of you, child. You are not a monster. You are just a poor, tired—"

"Oh, please don't!" pleaded the girl, "tears rushing to her eyes."

She raised Mrs. Wrandsall's hand to her lips and covered it with kisses.

Long after she went to sleep, Mrs. Wrandsall stood beside the bed, looking down at the pale, stricken face, and tried to solve the problem that suddenly had become a part of her very existence.

"It is not friendship," she argued, "it is not charity, it is not humanity. It's the debt I owe, that's all. She did the thing for me that I could not have done myself because I loved him. I owe her something for that."

Later on she turned her attention to the trunks. Her decision was made. With ruthless hands she dragged gown after gown from the "innovations" and cast them over chairs, on the floor, across the foot of the bed; smart things from Paris and Vienna; ball gowns, tea gowns, lingerie, blouses, stockings, and all of the countless things that a woman of fashion and means indulges herself in when she goes abroad for that purpose and no other to speak of. From the closets she drew forth New York "tailor-suits" and other garments.

Until long after six o'clock she bustled herself over this huge pile of costly raiment, portions of which she had worn but once or twice, some not at all, selecting certain dresses, hats, stockings, etc., each of which she laid carefully aside; an imposing pile of many hues, all bright and gay and glittering. In another heap she laid the somber things of black; a gauntlet assortment as compared to the other.

Then she stood back and surveyed the two heaps with tired eyes, a curious, almost scornful smile on her lips. "There!" she said with a sigh. "The black pile is mine, the gay pile is yours," she went on, turning toward the sleeping girl. "What a travesty!"

Then she gathered up the soiled garments her charge had worn and cast them into the bottom of a trunk, which she locked. Laying out a carefully selected assortment of her own garments for the girl's use when she arose, Mrs. Wrandsall sat down beside the bed and waited, knowing that sleep would come to her.

CHAPTER III.

Netty Castleton.

At half past six she went to the telephone and called for the morning newspapers. At the same time she asked that a couple of district messen-

ger boys be sent to her room with the least possible delay. The hushed, scared voice of the telephone girl downstairs convinced her that news of the tragedy was abroad; she could imagine the girl looking at the headlines with awed eyes even as she responded to the call from room 418, and her shudder as she realized that it was the wife of the dead man speaking.

One of the night clerks, pale and agitated, came up with the papers. Without as much as a glance at the headlines, she tossed the papers on the table. "I have sent for two messenger boys. It is too early to accomplish much by telephone, I fear. Will you be so kind as to telephone at seven o'clock or a little after to my apartment?—You will find the number under Mr. Wrandsall's name. Please inform the butler or his wife that they may expect me by ten o'clock, and that I shall bring a friend with me—a young lady. Kindly have my motor sent to Haffner's garage, and looked after. When the reporters come, as they will, please say to them that I will see them at my own home at eleven o'clock."

The clerk, considerably relieved, took his departure in some haste, and she was left with the morning papers, each of which she scanned rapidly. The details, of course, were meager. There was a double-headed account of her visit to the inn and her extraordinary return to the city. Her chief interest, however, did not rest in these particulars, but in the speculations of the authorities as to the identity of the mysterious woman—and her whereabouts. There was the likelihood that she was not the only one who had encountered the girl on the highway or in the neighborhood of the inn. So far as she could glean from the reports, however, no one had seen the girl, nor was there the slightest hint offered as to her identity. The papers of the previous afternoon had published lurid accounts of the murder, with all of the known details, the name of the victim at that time still being a mystery. She remembered reading the story with no little interest. The only new feature in the case, therefore, was the identification of Chellis Wrandsall by his "beautiful wife," and the sensational manner in which it had been brought about. With considerable interest she noted the hour that these dispatches had been received from "special correspondents," and wondered where the shrewd, lynx-eyed reporters napped while she was at the inn. All of the dispatches were timed three o'clock and each paper characterized its issue as an "Extra," with Chellis Wrandsall's name in huge type across as many columns as the dignity of the sheet permitted.

Not a word of the girl! Absolute mystery!

Mrs. Wrandsall returned to her post beside the bed of the sleeper in the adjoining room. Deliberately she placed the newspaper on a chair near the girl's pillow, and then raised the window shades to let in the hard gray light of early morn.

It was not her present intention to arouse the wan stranger, who slept as one dead. So gentle was her breathing that the watcher stood in some fear at the fair, smooth breast that seemed scarcely to rise and fall. For a long time she stood beside the bed, looking down at the face of the sleeper, a troubled expression in her eyes.

"I wonder how many times you were seen with him, and where, and by whom," were the questions that ran in a single strain through her mind. "Where do you come from? Where did you meet him? Who is there that knows of your acquaintance with him?"

Her lawyer came in great haste and perturbation at eight o'clock, in response to the letter delivered by one of the messengers. A second letter had gone by like means to her husband's brother, Leslie Wrandsall, instructing him to break the news to his father and mother and to come to her apartment after he had attended to the removal of the body to the family home near Washington square. She made it quite plain that she did not want Chellis Wrandsall's body to lie under the roof that sheltered her.

His family had resented their marriage. Father, mother and sister had objected to her from the beginning, not because she was unworthy, but because her tradepeople ancestry was not so remote as his. She found a curious sense of pleasure in returning to them the thing they prized so highly and surrendered to her with such bitterness of heart. She had not been good enough for him; that was their attitude. Now she was returning him to them, as one would return an article that had been tested and found to be worthless. She would have no more of him!

Carroll, her lawyer, an elderly man of vast experience, was not surprised to find her quite calm and reasonable. He had come to know her very well in the past few years. He had been her father's lawyer up to the time of that excellent tradesman's demise, and he had settled the estate with such unusual dispatch that the heirs—there were many of them—regarded him as an admirable person and kept him busy over afterward straightening out their own affairs. Which goes to prove that policy is often better than honesty.

"I quite understand, my dear, that while it is a dreadful shock to you, you are perfectly reconciled to the matter—to the—well, I might say the culmination of his troubles," said Mr. Carroll tactfully, after she had related for his benefit the story of the night's adventure, with reservation concerning the girl who slumbered in the room beyond.

"Hardly that, Mr. Carroll. Resigned, perhaps, I can't say that I am reconciled. All my life I shall feel that I have been cheated," she said. He looked up sharply. Something in her tone puzzled him. "Cheated, my

dear? Oh, I see. Cheated out of years and years of happiness, I see."

She bowed her head. Neither spoke for a full minute.

"It's a horrible thing to say, Sara, but this tragedy does away with another and perhaps more unpleasant alternative; the divorce I have been urging you to consider for so long."

"Yes, we are spared all that," she said. Then she met his gaze with a sudden flash of anger in her eyes. "But I would not have divorced him—never. You understood that, didn't you?"

"You couldn't have gone on for ever, my dear child, enduring the—"

She stopped him with a sharp exclamation. "Why discuss it now? Let the past take care of itself, Mr. Carroll. The past came to an end last night. I want advice for the future, not for the past."

He drew back, hurt by her manner. She was quick to see that she had offended him.

"I beg your pardon, my best of friends," she cried earnestly. He smiled. "If you will take present advice, Sara, you will let go of yourself for a spell and see if tears won't relieve the tension under—"

"Tears!" she cried. "Why should I give way to tears? What have I to weep for? That man up there in the country? The cold, dead thing that spent its last living moments without a thought of love for me? Ah, no, my friend, I shed all my tears while he was alive. There are none left to be shed for him now. He exacted his all share of them. It was his pleasure to wring them from me because he knew I loved him. He leaned forward and spoke slowly, distinctly, so that he would never forget the words. 'But listen to me, Mr. Carroll. You also know that I loved him. Can you believe me when I say to you that I hate that dead thing up there in Burton's Inn as no one ever hated before? Can you understand what I mean? I loved that dead body, Mr. Carroll. I loved the life that was in it. It was the life of him that I loved, the warm, appealing life of him. It has gone out. Some one less amiable than I suffered at his hands and—well, that is enough. I hate the dead body she left behind her, Mr. Carroll.'"

The lawyer wiped the cool moisture from his brow. "I think I understand," he said, but he was filled with wonder. "Extraordinary! Ahem! I should say—Alas! Dear me! Yes, yes—I've never really thought of it in that light."

"I dare say you haven't," she said, lying back in the chair as if suddenly exhausted.

"By the way, my dear, have you breakfasted?"

"No, I hadn't given it a thought. Perhaps it would be better if I had some coffee."

"I will ring for a waiter," he said, springing to his feet.

"Not now, please. I have a young friend in the other room—a guest who arrived last night. She will attend to it when she awakes. Poor thing, it has been dreadfully trying for her."

"Good heaven, I should think so," said he, with a glance at the closed door. "Is she asleep?"

"Yes, I shall not call her until you have gone."

"May I inquire—"

"A girl I met recently—an English girl," said she succinctly, and forthwith changed the subject. "There are a few necessary details that must be attended to, Mr. Carroll. That is why I sent for you at this early hour. Mr. Leslie Wrandsall will take charge—"

"You Did Not Know He Had a Wife?" She Cried.

"Ah!" she straightened up suddenly. "What a farce it is going to be!"

Rejoice her at eleven o'clock, when the reporters were to be expected. He was to do all the talking for her. While he was there, Leslie Wrandsall called her up on the telephone. Hearing but one side of the rather prolonged conversation, he was filled with wonder at the tactful way in which she met and parried the inevitable questions and suggestions coming from her horror-stricken brother-in-law. Without the slightest trace of offensiveness in her manner, she gave Leslie to understand that the final obsequies must be conducted in the home of his parents, to whom once more her husband belonged, and that she would abide by all arrangements his family elected to make. Mr. Carroll surmised from the trend of conversation that young Wrandsall was about to leave for the scene of the tragedy, and that the house was in a state of unspeakable distress. The lawyer smiled rather grimly to himself as he turned to look out of the window. He did not have to be told that Chellis was the idol of the family, and that, so far as they were concerned, he could do no wrong!

After his departure, Mrs. Wrandsall gently opened the bedroom door and was surprised to find the girl wide awake, resting on one elbow, her star-

ing eyes fastened on the newspaper that topped the pile on the chair.

Catching sight of Mrs. Wrandsall she pointed to the paper with a trembling hand and cried out, in a voice full of horror:

"Did you place them there for me to read? Who was with you in the other room just now? Was it some one about the—some one looking for me? Speak! Please tell me. I heard a man's voice—"

The other crossed quickly to her side.

"Don't be alarmed. It was my lawyer. There is nothing to fear at present. Yes, I left the papers there for you to see. You can see what a sensation it has caused. Chellis Wrandsall was one of the most widely known men in New York. But I suppose you know that without my telling you."

The girl sank back with a groan. "My God, what have I done? What will come of it all?"

"I wish I could answer that question," said the other, taking the girl's hand in hers. Both were trembling. After an instant's hesitation, she laid her other hand in the dark, disheveled hair of the wild-eyed creature, who still continued to stare at the headlines. "I am quite sure they will not look for you here, or in my home."

"In your home?"

"You are to go with me. I have thought it all over. It is the only way. Come, I must ask you to pull yourself together. Get up at once, and dress. Here are the things you are to wear."

She indicated the orderly pile of garments with a wave of her hand.

Slowly the girl crept out of bed, combed, bewildered, stunned.

"Where are my own things? I—I cannot accept these. Pray give me my own—"

Mrs. Wrandsall checked her. "You must obey me, if you expect me to help you. Don't you understand that I have had a—boreavement? I cannot wear these things now. They are useless to me. But we will speak of all that later on. Come, be quick. I will help you to dress. First go to the telephone and ask them to send a waiter to—these rooms. We must have something to eat. Please do as I tell you."

Standing before her benefactress, her fingers fumbling impatiently at the neck of the night-dress, the girl still continued to stare dumbly into the calm, dark eyes before her.

"You are so good, I—I—"

"Let me help you," interrupted the other, deliberately setting about to remove the night-dress. The girl caught it up as it slipped from her shoulders, a warm flush suffusing her face, a shamed look springing into her eyes.

"Thank you, I can—get on very well. I only wanted to ask you a question. It has been on my mind, waking and sleeping. Can you tell me anything about—do you know his wife?"

The question was so abrupt, so startling that Mrs. Wrandsall uttered a sharp little cry. For a moment she could not reply.

"I am so sorry, so desperately sorry for her," added the girl plaintively. "I know her," the other managed to say with an effort.

"If I had only known that he had a wife," began the girl bitterly, almost angrily.

Mrs. Wrandsall grasped her by the arm. "You did not know that he had a wife?" she cried.

The girl's eyes flashed with a sudden, fierce fire in their depths. "God to heaven, no! I did not know it until—Oh, I can't speak of it! Why should I tell you about it? Why should you be interested in hearing it?"

Mrs. Wrandsall drew back and regarded the girl's set, unhappy face. There was a curious light in her eyes that escaped the other's notice—a light that would have puzzled her not a little.

"But you will tell me everything—a little later," she said, strangely calm. "Now, but—before many hours have passed. First of all, you must tell me who you are, where you live—everything except what happened in Burton's Inn. I don't want to hear that at present—perhaps never. Yes, on second thoughts, I will say never! You are never to tell me just what happened up there, or just what led up to it. Do you understand? Never!"

The girl stared at her in amazement. "But I—I must tell some one," she cried vehemently. "I have a right to defend myself—"

"I am not asking you to defend yourself," said Mrs. Wrandsall shortly. "Then, as if afraid to remain longer, she rushed from the room. In the doorway, she turned for an instant to say: 'Do as I told you. Telephone. Please as quickly as you can.' She closed the door swiftly."

Standing in the center of the room, her hands clenched until the nails cut the flesh, she said over and over again to herself: "I don't want to know! I don't want to know!"

A few minutes later she was critically inspecting the young woman who came from the bedroom attired in a street dress that neither of them had ever donned before. The girl, looking fresher, prettier and even younger than when she had seen her last, was in no way abashed. She seemed to have accepted the garments and the situation in the same spirit of resignation and hope; as if she had decided to make the most of her slim chance to profit by these amazing circumstances.

They sat opposite each other at the little breakfast table.

"Please pour the coffee," said Mrs. Wrandsall. The waiter had left the room at her command. The girl's hand shook, but she complied without a word.

"Now you may tell me who you are, and—but wait! You are not to say anything about what happened at the inn. Guard your words carefully. I am not asking for a confession. I do not care to know what happened there. It will make it easier for me to protect

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you. You may call it conscience. Keep your big secret to yourself. Not one word to me. Do you understand?"

"You mean that I am not to reveal, even to you, the causes which led up to—"

"Nothing—absolutely nothing," said Mrs. Wrandsall firmly.

"But I cannot permit you to judge me—without hearing the story. It is so vital to me."

"I can judge you without hearing all of the—evidence, if that's what you mean. Simply answer the questions I shall ask, and nothing more. There are certain facts I must have from you if I am to shield you. You must tell me the truth. I take it you are an English girl. Where do you live? Who are your friends? Where is your family?"

The girl's face flushed for an instant and then grew pale again.

"I will tell you the truth," she said. "My name is Hetty Castleton. My father is Col. Braid Castleton of the British army. My mother is dead. She was Kitty Glynn, at one time a popular music hall performer in London. She was Irish. She died two years ago. My father was a gentleman. I do not say he is a gentleman, for his treatment of my mother reveals him from that distinction. He is in the far east, China, I think. I have not seen him in more than five years. He deserted my mother. That's all there is to that side of my story. I appeared in two or three of the musical pieces produced in London two seasons ago, in the chorus. I never got beyond that, for very good reasons. I was known as Hetty Glynn. Three weeks ago I started for New York, sailing from Liverpool. Previously I had served in the capacity of governess in the family of John Budding, a brewer. They had a son, a young man of twenty. Two months ago I was dismissed. A California lady, Mrs. Holcombe, offered me a situation as governess to her two little girls soon afterward. I was to go to her home in San Francisco. She provided the money necessary for the voyage and for other expenses. She is still in Europe. I landed in New York a fortnight ago, following her directions, presented myself at a certain bank—I have the name somewhere—where my railroad tickets were to be in readiness for me, with further instructions. They were to give me twenty-five pounds on the presentation of my letter from Mrs. Holcombe. They gave me the money and then handed me a cablegram from Mrs. Holcombe, notifying me that my services would not be required. There was no explanation. Just that."

"On the steamer I met—him. His deck chair was next to mine. I noticed that his name was Wrandsall—'C. Wrandsall' the card on the chair informed me. I—"

"You crossed on the steamer with him?" interrupted Mrs. Wrandsall.

"Yes, I did. I—"

"Night before last?"

The girl shuddered. Mrs. Wrandsall turned her face away and waited.

"There is nothing more I can tell you, unless you permit me to tell all," the girl resumed after a moment of hesitation.

(To Be Continued.)

quickly.

"Yes."

"Had—had you seen him before? In London?"

"Never. Well, we became acquainted, as people do. He—he was very handsome and agreeable." She paused for a moment to collect herself.

"Very handsome and agreeable," said the other slowly.

"We got to be very good friends. There were not many people on board, and apparently he knew none of them. It was too cold to stay on deck much of the time, and it was very rough. He had one of the splendid suites on the—"

"Pray omit unnecessary details. You landed and went—where?"

"He advised me to go to an hotel—I can't recall the name. It was rather an unpleasant place. Then I went to the bank, as I have stated. After that I did not know what to do. I was stunned, bewildered. I called him up on the telephone and—he asked me to meet him for dinner at a queer little cafe, far down town. We—"

"And you had no friends, no acquaintances here?"

"No. He suggested that I go into one of the musical shows, saying he thought he could arrange it with a manager who was a friend. It with him to take me over, he said. But I would not consider it, not for an instant. I had had enough of the stage. I—I am really not fitted for it. Besides, I am qualified—well qualified—to be a governess—but that is neither here nor there. I had some money—perhaps forty pounds. I found lodgings with some people in Nineteenth street. He never came there to see me. I can see plainly now why he argued it would not be—well, he used the word 'wise.' But we went occasionally to dine together. We went about in a motor—a little red one. He—he told me he loved me. That was one night about a week ago. I—"

"I don't care to hear about it," cried the other. "No need of that. Spare me the silly side of the story."

"Silly, madam? In God's

